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Objections to 'Outsider' Being Named CIA Head

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WASHINGTON.

The American people just happened to read in their newspapers that a new man has been named to head the Central Intelligence Agency. The news item had the look of a routine occurrence—that the head of an agency was merely desirous of leaving and that someone else was taking his place.

But the truth is that the kind of change made can impair the morale of a vast agency of the government and could mean the differences between success and failure in the "cold war" itself.

Many years ago a European intelligence officer of a Western country who had spent a long career in the service was asked to evaluate American efforts in the field of intelligence. He replied that it would take the United States from 20 to 30 years to become efficient — largely because it never had an intelligence service before.

Something of the enormity of the problems faced by the CIA can be inferred from the fact that it spends a half-billion dollars a year and must have personnel familiar with military operations, personnel familiar with diplomatic activities and systems, personnel familiar with business, economics and finance, and personnel familiar with the whole system of espionage—both on defense and on offense—in the "cold war." Above all, they must be trained inside the intelligence agency itself. The longevity of service is a key factor in its success.

President Johnson now has named Adm. William F. Raborn jr., (ret.) who has a good reputation in the field of science and in naval operations. But a mistake was made in failing to promote someone in the Central Intelligence Agency itself. For it is not a political institution, and its chief officer should not be appointed to satisfy the personal predilections of a President.

President Johnson is reported not to have consulted the top men in the CIA when he made the new appointment. He did not ask the advice or retain the services of the second highest official in the CIA, Lt. Gen. Marshall Carter, who reluctantly and almost unwillingly took over his post at the CIA a few years ago. He did so at the urgent insitence of President Kennedy, who told him that it was more important for him to take this post than to command a big army unit for which he was in line at the time. Gen. Carter is 53 years old. His experience now will be lost to his associates and to the new personnel.

There have been some comments made that no one from the armed services should head up the CIA. But this is an uninformed suggestion, for it is very important to have someone at the top of the agency who not only understands military operations but can direct the activities of various military personnel who undertake some of the most delicate tasks in the whole CIA operation.

The CIA is one of the most useful agencies in the entire government, and in some respects transcends in importance almost all the other agencies of the government. For if erroneous information or no information at all is received on points of major concern during a crisis, a decision can be made by the President that could plunge this country into war or reduce its effectiveness in a serious negotiation designed to prevent a war.

The CIA is a relatively young institution compared with some of the intelligence services of different countries of the world. It takes years and years of training in the techniques of intelligence work to produce an effective instrumentality. The United States has been making substantial progress in this field, but the changes just instituted at the top of the agency could retard that progress.

Sooner or later, Congress, which has special commtitees to study the CIA, might well take a closer look at the morale problems of the agency. Unfortunately, there are jealousies between governmental agencies, and the CIA has suffered from the criticism of some of the civilian agencies which feel they should be able to tell the intelligence people how to do their jobs. There are also conflicts inside the government between the various agencies which have investigative duties. While theoretically there is supposed to be a free interchange of information between such agencies, there is often friction and jealousy.

All this is the subject for possible study by a thoroughgoing investigation by a Congressional committee. The true story, for example, of whether the CIA was efficient or inefficient in connection with the Bay of Pigs affair in Cuba in 1961 is one that has never been objectively explained to the public. It would serve no good purpose to reveal all the details of the operations of an intelligence agency. But Congressional committee might well have made a non-political study to determine who was responsible for tragic mistakes made in the executive branch of our own government and then could have announced its conclusions without disclosing any important secrets.